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S E C R E T AMMAN 001835

SIPDIS

NOFORN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [I2](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: TFIZ01: JORDAN'S EXPULSION OF IRAQI DIPLOMATS: GOJ
DEFENSIVE AFTER SABRI LETTER AND RAMADAN TV ATTACK

REF: A. (A) FBIS GMP20030325000335

[1](#)B. (B) FBIS GMP20030325000176

[1](#)C. (C) FBIS GMP20030325000243

[1](#)D. (D) FBIS GMP20030325000316

Classified By: Ambassador Edward W. Gnehm. Reasons 1.5 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) Naji Sabri's publicly released March 25 letter denouncing the GOJ's decision to expel five Iraqi diplomats (ref A), and Taha Yasin Ramadan's subsequent outburst against Jordan during a March 25 press conference (ref b), have left GOJ officials in a state of acute public discomfort as they seek to defend Jordan's actions. In his letter to FonMin Muasher, Sabri vented that GOJ intelligence officials escorted one of the diplomats in question "in an uncivilized manner from his house in Amman and beat him up, as if he is a war criminal. They did so while all the faithful and the righteous Arabs view the Iraqis with pride. This makes me wonder: O Brothers, what have you left for the U.S.-British-Zionist enemy?" Ramadan's subsequent TV appearance also singled out Jordan for criticism for "fulfilling" a U.S. demand to expel Iraqi diplomats when other Arab states had not, and for claiming that Iraq had cut off supplies of oil when, according to Ramadan, it had not.

[1](#)2. (C) These twin Iraqi broadsides forced the GOJ into a defensive crouch while it engaged in damage control with the Jordanian public. FonMin Muasher held a press conference broadcast live on Jordan TV (refs c and d) on the evening of 3/25 in which he reiterated the GOJ's explanation that the five Iraqis in question were expelled for security reasons and that the Iraqi government is "fully aware" of those reasons. He went on to say "If there is Iraqi insistence to consider the expulsion of the diplomats a U.S. dictate or to make any other accusations, we will not mind disclosing these security considerations that will not please any Jordanian or Iraqi citizen."

[1](#)3. (C) Muasher's statements make clear GOJ's extreme sensitivity to the accusation that it is acting at the behest of the U.S.. It has sought to make the case that its actions were solely for the protection of Jordan and in no way were in the service of the U.S. In this formulation, the GOJ took the action it did not as part of the global U.S. effort to close down Iraqi diplomatic missions, but rather in response to the Jordan-specific actions (or planned actions) of the individuals in question. To underline the point, Muasher stated that King Abdullah is ready to receive new Iraqi diplomats and the Iraqi embassy will not be closed.

[1](#)4. (C) Following his press conference, Muasher called the Ambassador to ask if the Ambassador could publicly acknowledge that the U.S. had not requested the expulsion and reinforce Muasher's public statement that the GOJ's actions were based on its own criteria. The Ambassador declined, but said that, if asked, he would make reference to our global concerns and simply refer to the GOJ any questions about their actions.

[1](#)5. (S/NF) According to ORCA, the GID identified seven Iraqi intelligence agents for expulsion, five with diplomatic status and two who worked for an Iraqi trade office in Aqaba. GID confirms that three of the five accredited as diplomats have been removed. With regard to the two Aqaba trade officials, they were asked to leave Jordan. However, as of 3/26, we do not know whether they have left. Additionally, GID detained two Iraqi Airways personnel suspected of being IIS officers. Their situation as of 3/26 is not clear. ORCA is working with GID on these issues.

Comment

[1](#)6. (C) This small tempest in a much bigger storm highlights the dangers the GOJ sees lurking as it awaits the "tipping point" when a U.S. military victory and clear signs of Iraqi public happiness with the fall of Saddam transform public opinion here. Until that point, and as long as most Jordanians root for Iraqi resistance, the GOJ will bob and weave as much as it can to avoid connection with U.S. military actions in Iraq.

